

November 23, 2025

REMEMBERING OUR REDEEMING GOD

Psalm 114

(4 of 4 in a series of selected Psalms)

Growing up in Kentucky, I was a huge basketball fan from the time I was a child. There's not much we have in Kentucky. Though sharing over 420 miles-worth of border with Tennessee, Kentucky is a much poorer state. There are no professional sports teams (or at least weren't when I lived there. I don't know if some kind of professional soccer team has sneaked into the state in recent years). There were lots of farms on the west part of the state and coal mines in the east part of the state, and very few seemed to be getting rich in those labors. But we had Kentucky basketball, the winningest team in the sport. So, that's been the pride of lots of Kentuckians. And one of my fondest memories of watching Kentucky basketball happened in 1998. That year we won our seventh title, beating Utah in the final game. But there were several moments prior to that final whistle in that final game where I thought our season was finished.

In our elite eight game, we were down seventeen points with nine minutes to go against Duke and made one of the most remarkable comebacks I'd ever witnessed. Then, in our final four game against Stanford, we were down ten points in the second half, and once more, we came back to win and make the finals. Then came the championship game, and wouldn't you guess it, we went to the locker room at halftime down points. I remember as the team was walking off the court for the halftime break, one of the announcers said that a team had never come back from a halftime deficit of ten points or more to win the title.

That statement always made me wonder what Kentucky's coach, Tubby Smith, said to his team at halftime. I've never heard anyone share it, but I bet I have an idea. My guess is that part of his halftime speech was an exhortation to remember. As they looked at a halftime obstacle that had never been overcome in championship game history and considered a comeback for which there had been no precedent, ironically, I imagine that his message was to remember. I'm sure he said, "Remember when we were down seventeen points to Duke two games ago? Well, what happened?" And of course, the answer would have been, "We came back to win." And he could have said, "Remember what happened last game when we were down ten points in the second half? Well, what happened?" And, again, the answer would have been, "We came back to win." And so I imagine he told them that they should expect to go back on that court for the second half and do what no team before them had done in light of the fact that they'd just made even more remarkable comebacks the last two games. And that's exactly what they did, winning our seventh national title that year.

I think that's the message of remembering is the message of Psalm 114. We don't know exactly when the psalm was written, but we know it's after the Exodus and the entrance into the promised land because there's mention of God parting the Red Sea and turning back the waters of the Jordan. Moreover, there's mention of God making Israel his dominion, which is a reference to this people being the place from which he would demonstrate his rule and reign in the earth,

which he did chiefly through the reign of David and Solomon, so it's quite possibly written after the establishment of Israel's monarchy as well. My guess is that it's written in the time of the exile, after both the northern and southern kingdoms have been destroyed, and the people of Judah have been hauled off to live as exiles in Babylon.

So my guess is that this psalm is written as the people of God are in exile, understanding that the Lord had made promises through the prophets that they'd be ultimately delivered from Babylon, and they want to walk in hope. But everything around them looks bleak. Their deliverance from exile in Babylon looks like a hopeless dream. But, again, they want to live in hope. And in order to do so, they find themselves looking back to the Lord's former actions at the Exodus and in the book of Joshua in order to spur them on to hope in the present. Really, regardless of whether I'm right on the particular circumstances in which the psalm was written, it certainly is a psalm that looks back from the present to the past. And I think it does so in order that the people of God might remember what God had done in the past in order to give them great hope in the present.

And we need to do the same. There may well be many of us this morning walking in feeling a bit hopeless. Perhaps life just isn't turning out the way you hoped it would. You have family members struggling, perhaps your job isn't what you hoped, or a thousand other reasons to feel disappointment and discouragement. And Psalm 114 calls us to remember what God has done in the past in order that we might have hope in the present. So, I want to look at this psalm this morning and note a few things that we need to remember. And, first, I want to encourage us to remember our redemption.

Remember your redemption

As Psalm 114 opens, the psalmist immediately takes the reader back to the moment when God redeemed his people from Egyptian captivity. He writes, "When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language" (v. 1). With this, he's writing of their deliverance, but he's sufficiently describing the situation to make you remember how odd and troublesome their captivity was. He notes that they were captive among a people of a strange language.

Ever since the time of Babel, language has been an enormous barrier. It divides people. And there's little more frustrating if you travel in a foreign country than finding yourself in a place where they don't speak your language. To sit among a group of people who are conversing around you, and you can't understand a word they're saying, sends a strong reminder that you're not home. Well, that was Israel. They weren't home. They were slaves. And they needed to be delivered. But when you're a slave, you need someone from the outside to deliver you. And that's precisely what God did.

We'll remember from the Exodus that the Lord heard their cries for deliverance and sent Moses to them so that he not only brought them out of Egypt, but he brought them out plundering the Egyptians. When the Lord decided that he'd gather a people for himself, he chose to take a people who were in slavery to the world's greatest power at that time. That's what God did to

redeem them. And the psalmist sums up that miraculous work of redemption in a simple few words, saying, “When Israel went out from Egypt.”

And we do the same when we speak, don’t we? We just heard testimonies this last Sunday night, and we say things like, “When God saved me” or “When I came to faith.” And that’s great. We speak that way because the Bible speaks that way. But there are enormous truths behind that simple phrase: “When God saved me.” We could say, “God sent his Son into the world to live the perfect life of obedience that I had no chance of living. After all, I had been born into this world sinful and guilty and lived that out in my rebellion in multiple ways. But even that the Lord dealt with by Jesus dying on the cross to pay the penalty and bear the wrath of God that my sin earned. Then, after having died, he came back to life and walked out of the tomb alive in order to reign over all things as the one who has all authority in heaven and earth.”

Now, that’s crazy enough, but that’s only part of it. Even after Jesus did that, you were born into this world dead in your sins, falling the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air. And not only did you not naturally see the glory of Christ but actually loved darkness rather than light. And yet, the Lord opened your eyes, gave you a new heart, put his Spirit in you, and has caused your desires to change so that you now love the light and hate darkness. God did that. That was his work of redemption for you.

And I’m sure you could add even more details, but the point is that God did something no less amazing to redeem you than he did to deliver Israel. And if the psalmist sees need to remind his present-day Israelite peers what God did to redeem them in the past so that they might have hope in the present, then surely you need to remember what Christ has done to redeem you as well. You need to remember that because there are times when we can be overwhelmed by despair and hopelessness, but despair and hopelessness have no place with us when we consider our redemption. So, remember your redemption. And, second, remember that God’s blessing of making you his own.

Remember God’s blessing of making you his own

After speaking of Israel being delivered from Egyptian captivity, the psalmist writes in verse 2, “Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.” In order to consider this, I want us to consider an opposite picture. Imagine you’re among the mountains, and you see a child fall. He is rolling down the mountain, end over end, heading toward a cliff that will end in his certain death, and though there are a number of people who see this unfolding, not one of them is able to do anything to save the child. But you take off running toward the child, sprinting with unbelievable speed, and then—right as the child is about to the cliff—you go into a slide, stop yourself, and reach over the cliff, grabbing and holding onto the child’s hand, as you hang over the cliff, pulling up the child and saving his life. And then, after you pull the child up, to a crowd that can’t believe the might and heroism you’ve just displayed, you toss the child to the ground, stand up with your arms raised to the people, and say, “Look how awesome I am,” with complete disregard for the child.

The Exodus could have been that scene. Egypt had the audacity to worship all kinds of false gods instead of the one true God. The Pharaoh defied God's command when he sent Moses to tell him to let his people go. And God certainly demonstrated his might over Pharaoh and all these false gods. Certainly the Exodus was a moment in which God's deliverance of the Israelites showed his awesome might over all. And he could have done that and then tossed Israel to the side, saying to Egypt, "See how awesome and mighty I am?" But he didn't deliver Israel *merely* in order to demonstrate his might over their captors. He delivered them so that he might make them his treasured people.

That's what the psalmist is saying in verse 2. God brought out his people and made them the people among whom he'd allow his presence to reside. God dwelt in the tabernacle (and later the temple) right in the midst of Israel in order that it might be clear that he is their God, and they are his people. He made them his sanctuary. And, he demonstrated his rule and reign among them, making them his dominion, as the psalm says. He showed his power to reign by raising up kings like David and Solomon. I mean, remember what Aaron has been showing up about Solomon's might, riches, and wisdom? All of that is God demonstrating *his* might, riches, and wisdom *through Israel's king*. God saved them in order to bless them as his own treasured people.

And he's done the same for us. He didn't save you in order to toss you to the ground. He saved you, mightily, in order that he might dwell with you, demonstrate his greatness and love through you, and lavish his grace on you. According to Ephesians 1:12, he chose you, adopted you as his own, and poured out grace on you in order that you might be "to the praise of his glory." In other words, if any of us were asking how God has demonstrated how mighty and loving he is, we could simply answer, "Just look at what he's done with _____" and then fill in that blank with any of us, for he has poured out his grace so that you might be to the praise of his glory. He's made you his own treasured possession. Remember that, especially when you're tempted to be hopeless and despairing. Third, remember God's power.

Remember God's power

If God treasured you and wanted you to be to the praise of his glory but were powerless, that'd be a real bummer. It'd be like watching that child tumble toward his death while saying, "I really wish this weren't happening to you," but being unable to do anything about it. But that's not our God. He treasures us *and* he is immensely powerful. And that's what the psalmist reminds the reader of in verses 3-7.

First, in verse 3 the psalmist recounts particular things that happened as God delivered the Israelites from slavery and then brought them into the promised land. He writes, "The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back." What makes this image of dividing the Red Sea and the Jordan River even more powerful is that the sea in particular and waters in general are often pictured as an enemy of God. In Isaiah 27, the serpent of old, Leviathan, is picture as a dragon that is in the sea (27:1). In Revelation 13, the beast who seeks harm for God's people rises out of the sea (13:1). And in the new creation, there will be no more sea (Rev 21:1). And we could add

more, but here you see the sea fleeing and waters being turned back. It's a picture of the power of our God against all obstacles and all enemies.

I think that's why the psalmist threw in a picture of the mountains and hills, saying, "The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs" (v. 4). It isn't that we need to come up with the precise historical event when the Lord caused mountains or hills to crumble. The idea is that no obstacle could stop the Lord from coming to his people, delivering them, and blessing them. It's as if creation was running away when he showed up. Again, God overcame every obstacle and enemy in delivering and blessing his people.

But God's power demonstrated in the past isn't limited to the past. Notice how in verse 5 we're no longer merely reflecting on the past. Rather, the psalmist is speaking to these enemies in the present. Actually, he's doing more than that. He's taunting them. Do you see that? He says, "What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?" (vv. 5-6). He's looking at the Red Sea, the Jordan, the mountains, and the hills and saying, "Are you afraid? You should be." That's taunting one's enemies. But that's how much confidence he has in the face of these enemies and obstacles when the Lord is on his side. In verse 7 he actually tells the entire earth to tremble before the Lord, writing, "Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."

Remembering the Lord's power gives the psalmist confidence in the face of his enemies and obstacles before him, and it should do the same for us. The God who mightily redeemed you and has made you his own treasured possession has all might and power. There is nothing that can thwart him from carrying out his plans in your life. Now, of course, that doesn't mean that the Lord will grant us every desire. We only have finite wisdom and don't know what's good for ourselves. Moreover, we tend to think that his power should be known through our power instead of through our weakness. But God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. And so we humble ourselves before our Lord, and yet we know that everything he intends for us is for our good, and nothing can stop him from bringing that about. And so, in the face of hopelessness or despair, remember the power of God. And, finally, remember God's faithful provision.

Remember God's faithful provision

As the psalmist ends the psalm, continuing to speak of God's power, he adds one facet to God's demonstration of his power. He writes, "Who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water" (v. 8). This is a reference to when the Lord provided water for the Israelites to drink from a rock in Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:2-13. In other words, the psalmist now demonstrates God's power in God's provision. As the Israelites remembered this provision of water from a rock, how could they doubt God's ability to meet whatever needs they faced in the present?

And the same is true for us. God has met our needs again and again. I was speaking with a college student the other day who'd had one of those weeks where he had three tests and two

papers, and I said to him, “Oh, I remember those days. I remember saying, ‘Lord, if you can just help me get through this week!’” Well, he did. And that’s even the most impressive thing he’s done to provide and care for me.

Again, this doesn’t mean that God’s provision is always exactly what we desire. I’ve desired and prayed for things in which the Lord has simply allowed me to see that his grace is sufficient for the circumstances I wanted to change. And yet he’s always given me what I’ve needed to walk in in obedience to him and seek his glory. And I know he’s done the same for you. If we wanted to, we could fill the rest of the day talking about ways the Lord has shown his provision in our lives, and at the end of the day more stuff would be coming to mind that we overlooked or forgot. Our Lord has provided for us so faithfully. Therefore, we must not forget that, especially when we face need in the present.

Psalm 114 calls us to look at our circumstances and feelings of hopelessness and despair as we look at the present and potential future and to remember. It tells us to look back in order that we might look forward in hope. Remember your redemption. Remember how God has blessed you and made you his own treasured possession. Remember God’s power. And remember all the times and ways God has provided. How can you remember those things and be hopeless now? Trust him. I think that’s what Psalm 114 is saying to us.

And thankfully, we have a built-in way to remember as we come to the table. Jesus said that we do this in remembrance of him—no doubt including remembering his redemption, power, provision, and making us his own. So let’s come to the table now, remember, and walk forward in faith and faithful obedience before our Lord. Amen.